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INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/01/2017

TAGS: KWBG PINS IS PTER

SUBJECT: 80-90 GAZANS, INCLUDING HAMAS OFFICIALS AND OTHER MILITANTS, ENTER GAZA FROM EGYPT

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) 80-90 Palestinians, most members of Hamas, entered Gaza from Egypt early September 30, according to contacts in the Office of the President and Arabic-language press. Local media, citing witnesses and Hamas officials, report that the group included former PA Interior Minister Hani Talib al-Qawasmi, Hamas PLC members Mushir al-Masri and Farraj Muhammad al-Ghul, senior activists from Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC), and several prominent businessmen and religious leaders. Local press also report that many of these Palestinians have been in al-Arish, Egypt since Hamas' violent takeover of Gaza in mid-June.

¶2. (S) Officials in the PA Office of the President (Political Advisor Nimir Hammad, Security Secretary Hazem Attallah and Deputy Political Advisor Majdi Khaldi) said they were surprised and concerned by the GoE decision to allow the group's return to Gaza. They said several of the group are Hamas military-wing members who trained in Iran and a number of Arab states, including Syria. They said these Palestinians were stranded when the Rafah crossing closed in mid-June after heavy Fatah-Hamas violence and the departure of EU-BAM monitors. They added that the PA has no presence along the border, which is under Hamas and PRC control.

WALLES